

left countless Texans struggling to receive unemployment benefits as they navigate the Texas Workforce Commission's confusing processes.

A decline in Texas' sales tax revenues—the largest source of funding for the state budget—has created a shortfall that lawmakers will have to fill in the 2021 legislative session. Economists say weakened global demand for oil, high unemployment and the ongoing public health crisis will continue to weigh down Texas' economic recovery.

THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE DECREASED IN  
DECEMBER

Texas' unemployment rate in December was 7.2%—a decrease from the 8.1% November jobless rate, according to a Texas Workforce Commission report released Jan. 22. The state's unemployment rate for December is the latest indicator that the economic recovery in Texas will be slow and staggered.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE LIFE  
AND LEGACY OF WILLIAM "RED"  
LEWIS

**HON. MIKE GALLAGHER**

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 4, 2021

Mr. GALLAGHER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of a remarkable man: William "Red" Lewis. A Green Bay native and successful businessman, Red Lewis personified the entrepreneurial spirit generosity Northeast Wisconsin is known for.

Born in 1942, Red was the youngest of four children. He attended Premontre High School (later to become Notre Dame de la Baie Academy) and graduated in 1960. After multiple jobs in the Green Bay area, Red began his career at the local PDQ car wash, working his way up to manager in 1967. Seeing an avenue to improve PDQ's cleanliness and efficiency, Red bought the business in 1974.

To enhance PDQ's customer experience, Red founded PDQ Manufacturing. His leadership drove PDQ into becoming the world's largest touchless car wash manufacturer with clients in over 30 countries. In recognition of his innovation and contribution to the industry, Red was inducted into the Car Wash Hall of Fame in 2000 by the International Carwash Association.

Beyond his business success, Red was well-known in the community for his kind heart and extensive philanthropy. He was deeply dedicated to giving back to a community that has supported him. He was particularly fond of supporting the Green Bay Boys & Girls Club, the Lac Baie Girl Scout Council, Catholic Charities, Manna for Life Ministries, NEW Zoo and St. Willebroed Parish. He was also generous to his alma mater, Notre Dame de la Baie Academy, and local veterans organizations.

Red also had a passion for collecting cars, and in 2016 gifted the Green Bay community with The Automobile Gallery. This nonprofit is a beautiful addition to Green Bay's downtown whose collection of more than 120 automobiles spans 113 years. It boasts a 1912 Maxwell, 1963 Corvette, and 1982 DeLorean DMC-12, among many other restored models. Visitors from across the state come to Green Bay to enjoy the gallery which has quickly become a cherished community treasure.

Madam Speaker, words cannot adequately thank Red for his extraordinary commitment to

the Green Bay community. His passing will be mourned by many across Northeast Wisconsin. My prayers and condolences go out to his family and to all the lives he touched.

RECOGNIZING CAREN COWAN

**HON. YVETTE HERRELL**

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 4, 2021

Ms. HERRELL. Madam Speaker, today I rise to recognize a New Mexican who has been a tireless advocate for our farmers, ranchers, and the families who work every day to provide for America. Caren Cowan is not only a friend of mine, but of the hardworking New Mexicans who she stands up for every day. As the 2020 Cattleman of the Year and for a lifetime of service, Ms. Cowan deserves our appreciation.

After graduating from Arizona University in 1975 with a degree in Agriculture Communications, Caren worked for the Arizona National Livestock Show, the American Red Brangus Association in Texas, and the New Mexico Wool Growers. She has served as the Executive Director for the New Mexico Cattle Growers since 1997 where she fights to protect the rights of livestock producers and ensure their voices are always heard on every issue. She has taken on battles in the courtroom, tackled the often burdensome statutory and regulatory requirements head on, and successfully navigated the bureaucracies' often confusing rules and regulations, something not easily done. For 23 years Caren has been at the forefront of these issues and has worked tirelessly on behalf of the organization's members.

As a leader on the issues facing the farmers and ranchers of New Mexico, Ms. Cowan is training the next generation of advocates to ensure the New Mexico's agricultural families always have a voice. We are forever grateful for her work and dedication to the state we love.

MR. AND MRS. ORESTUS AND  
GERALDINE FLOWERS

**HON. JAMES COMER**

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 4, 2021

Mr. COMER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Mr. and Mrs. Orestus and Geraldine Flowers of Burkesville for recently celebrating their 75th anniversary.

Mr. and Mrs. Flowers have displayed commitment in all facets of their life. At twenty-two years of age, Mr. Flowers left his then-girlfriend, Geraldine, to serve in the Army for three-and-a-half-years during World War II. Mr. Flowers kept a picture of Geraldine in his wallet during the war, and upon returning, married Geraldine on February 1, 1946. Mr. and Mrs. Flowers displayed an exemplary level of commitment to both each other and our nation through his military service.

Mr. and Mrs. Flowers raised their family in Cumberland County, Kentucky. They and their three daughters, four grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren have been a staple in the community of Burkesville. Mr. Flowers

has served in numerous capacities in the local community. In 1952, he brought Houchens Market to Burkesville, where he served as manager for 32 years. After retiring from Houchens, he has continued work at Norris and New Funeral Home, where he is still showing off the picture of his wife that he took to war with him seventy-eight years ago.

Once again, I would like to join everyone in Burkesville and throughout the 1st District of Kentucky in congratulating Mr. and Mrs. Flowers on this extraordinary milestone.

HONORING VETERANS DURING  
NATIONAL SALUTE WEEK

**HON. JIM BANKS**

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 4, 2021

Mr. BANKS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to veterans cared for by the Department of Veterans Affairs in northeast Indiana and across the United States.

Each year, the week of February 14 is an opportunity for Americans to express their collective gratitude for the more than 9 million veterans of the United States Armed Services who are cared for in the VA system. This year's National Salute Week is the most important one to date, given the difficult times our nation has faced over the last 12 months with many of America's veterans hardest hit.

This week also serves as an opportunity for Hoosiers and Americans everywhere to learn about the role of the VA medical system, to encourage citizens to visit hospitalized Veterans and to become involved as volunteers Nationwide, over 61,000 volunteers provide more than 9.2 million volunteer hours serving America's veterans. Volunteers are a priceless asset to our veterans, to the VA and to the country.

As a veteran myself and member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee in Congress, I am honored to have served in uniform and to serve the people of northeast Indiana in Congress. One of my top priorities has been, and always will be, ensuring those who served the United States receive the honor, care, and opportunity they deserve.

This is a testament to the honor and sacrifice of those heroes who have served our country, and to those who serve them.

HONORING JOE LAROCCO

**HON. H. MORGAN GRIFFITH**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 4, 2021

Mr. GRIFFITH. Madam Speaker, I rise to honor Joseph Charles LaRocco of Salem, Virginia, who passed away on January 17, 2021 at the age of 67. Joe was a longtime coach and educator in Roanoke County who encouraged students and athletes toward excellence.

Joe was born in Schenectady, New York on October 28, 1953. He grew up in Roanoke, graduated from Andrew Lewis High School in 1972, and graduated from Roanoke College in 1976. As a young man, he attained the rank of Eagle Scout and was a standout track and field and cross country athlete, eventually

earning induction into the Roanoke College Athletic Hall of Fame in 1998. To the benefit of many young people in the Roanoke Valley, these activities would remain important to him for the rest of his life.

After coaching at Bassett High School from 1978 to 1980, he arrived at Cave Spring High School to teach American history and government and coach boys and girls outdoor track and field, indoor track, and cross country. He loved the topic of American history as well as local stories of the past, portraying western Virginia founding father Andrew Lewis on a number of occasions.

As a student, Joe set several school cross country or track and field records, and as a coach for a combined 31 seasons, he stood out as well. In 1980, he helped David Garlow win the Virginia High School League (VHSL) Group AAA boys cross country individual championship. He also coached future National Football League players Ronde and Tiki Barber. His record at Cave Spring earned him six coach of the year honors.

Joe retired from teaching in 2013, but he continued as a USA Track & Field and VHSL official and participated in the Star City Striders, a local running group. He was also on the Eagle Scout Board of Review. I shared several interests with Joe and join with many in the Roanoke Valley who will miss this outstanding educator and coach and good man. He is survived by his wife Terry; daughters and sons-in-law Jackie and John Downs and Cathy LaRocco and Jeff Black; granddaughter Brigid Downs; and brothers Jim LaRocco and wife Sharon and John LaRocco. I offer them my condolences on their loss.

#### TRIBUTE IN MEMORY OF BILL MARDIS

#### HON. HAROLD ROGERS

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 4, 2021*

Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the memory of my beloved friend, Bill Mardis, who was the longtime editor of the Commonwealth Journal in Somerset, Kentucky.

Though small in stature, Bill Mardis was a journalism giant in Somerset, wielding a mighty pen, a humble approach and a steel-trap mind. We first became friends in the 1970s, with shared roots in radio broadcasting and a zeal for history and politics. Our friendship never swayed Bill from asking tough questions and writing an occasional hard-hitting piece; still yet we maintained a mutual respect for one another at all times. He was a dearly loved, iconic member of the Lake Cumberland region and his life's work kept all of us more informed. If a story had heart and soul, it was undoubtedly penned by Mardis. His signature "Humble Reporter" satire series also provided much-needed comic relief to the seri-

ous nature of the daily news covering the rest of the pages. In person, Bill also brought a unique and jovial interview style to every situation, while remaining fair, straight-forward and balanced through-out his career spanning nearly six decades.

Bill was known for his stellar work ethic, often putting in 12-hour work days to publish an accurate, reputable newspaper. In recent years, our interviews would occasionally linger an hour or more as we drifted off topic and reminisced about our mutual friends and mentors who were instrumental to the growth and progress in southern Kentucky, from the late U.S. Sen. John Sherman Cooper to the late Pulaski Circuit Judge Roscoe Tartar, and others. He kept a tight grip on the political pulse of the Lake Cumberland region, cultivating a trusted network of friends across party lines, lending to his rich, in-depth reporting.

May his legacy of balanced and fair journalism live on at the Commonwealth Journal where he dedicated nearly 60 years with the utmost integrity. My wife Cynthia and I send our heartfelt condolences to Bill's family, his coworkers at the newspaper, and his expansive community of friends. In the words of our satirical Humble Reporter, "I ain't never seed nothin' lak hit" and I don't suspect we ever will again.

#### HONORING THE RETIREMENT OF PEORIA POLICE CHIEF LOREN MARION III

#### HON. DARIN LaHOOD

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 4, 2021*

Mr. LAHOOD. Madam Speaker, I would like to honor and congratulate Police Chief Loren Marion III on his retirement from the Peoria Police Department after 26 years.

Loren Marion was hired as a Police Officer by the City of Peoria on October 3, 1994. During his career, he worked in Patrol, on the Community Area Target Team, the Street Crimes Unit, the Vice and Narcotics Unit, and the Target Offender Unit. Chief Marion also held the collateral duty of Task Force Officer with the Drug Enforcement Administration. On November 14, 2018, he was selected as Police Chief of the Peoria Police Department. Before working for the City, Chief Marion also served on active duty with the Army Military Police.

During his time with the Peoria Police Department, Chief Marion has been recognized with numerous awards and accolades for his service and exemplary professional performance. In 2008, Loren was named "Officer of the Year" and awarded the American Legion Meritorious Service Award. Chief Marion was known for his dedication to his fellow officers and he established an Officer Wellness program that provides peer to peer support as well as a Police Chaplain that assists officers who have been exposed to trauma.

In May of 2019, under Chief Marion's leadership, the Peoria Police Department became fully accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies due to the improvement of community and police relations, policies and procedures, management, operations, and support services.

Chief Marion has always been committed to his work and his community. It is my privilege to congratulate Chief Marion on his service to the Peoria Police Department. We have all been blessed to have Chief Marion serving and protecting us. The City of Peoria is a better place because of his service.

#### HONORING THE LIFE OF RICHARD S. PEPPER

#### HON. DARIN LaHOOD

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 4, 2021*

Mr. LAHOOD. Madam Speaker, I would like to honor and remember the life of Richard Pepper, who passed away peacefully on January 28, 2021, at the age of 90.

Born in Barrington, Illinois in 1930, Richard, at an early age, displayed natural gravitation towards construction and philanthropy. Richard began his career working as an estimator for Pepper Construction in 1957. Soon after marrying his beloved wife, Roxy, Richard assumed leadership of the company after the sudden passing of his father, Stanley Pepper. Despite his young age, Richard showed the maturity and inclination to grow and foster the company and the ideals that his father had implemented. Under Richard's leadership, Pepper Construction strived to ensure their building decisions impacted the future to create a better quality of life for all.

Richard grew Pepper Construction into the nationally recognized construction firm known by so many across the Midwest. Richard held several leadership positions in the construction industry, including serving as president of the Associated General Contractors of America in 1983. He received the Jack Kinnaman Leadership Award from the American Institute of Constructors in 2015, which honors corporation leaders who have taken a visible leadership role in the American Institute of Constructors.

Richard's leadership at Pepper Construction has fostered a corporate culture that promotes community and industry involvement. During his time, Richard was well-known for his outspoken support of community improvement, advocating for bold initiatives, and striving to transform tomorrow.

We mourn the passing of Richard, a friend, and mentor to many. He left a lasting impact on those who had the pleasure of knowing him. May his memory be eternal.